

**SECTION:** BREASTFEEDING PROMOTION AND SUPPORT  
**SUBJECT:** Peer Counseling  
**ITEM:** *Program Requirements*



<b>Policy</b>	Local agencies that receive USDA funds targeted for breastfeeding peer counseling, shall incorporate the following minimum requirements into the design, implementation, enhancement and/or maintenance of their peer counselor programs.
<b>Authority</b>	USDA All States Memorandum 04-27, "Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Grants/Training" (April 8, 2004)  <i>"Using Loving Support to Manage Peer Counseling Programs"</i> training curriculum: Breastfeeding Peer Counseling (2004-2005)
<b>Minimum requirements</b>	<p><b>I. Characteristics of Peer Counselor:</b></p> <p>Local agencies utilizing USDA funds for breastfeeding peer counselor programs shall ensure all peer counselors meet the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• are paraprofessionals, without extended professional training;</li><li>• have good communication skills;</li><li>• have breastfed a child;</li><li>• are enthusiastic about breastfeeding and have a desire to share that enthusiasm;</li><li>• are selected from the group to be served;</li><li>• are fluent in the language of the WIC participants they counsel; and</li><li>• can communicate with the peer counselor program staff or have translations services available.</li></ul> <p><b>II. Staffing:</b></p> <p>Designate a peer counselor program manager/coordinator, and ensure program includes 0.25 full time equivalent (FTE) supervisor and 0.25 FTE International Board Certified Lactation Consultant [IBCLC] for every 4 peer counselors regardless of FTE of peer counselor. If the IBCLC is also the supervisor, the minimum requirement is 0.5 FTE.</p> <p><b>III. Job Parameters:</b></p> <p>The local agency shall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• develop job descriptions for peer counselor program team including a supervisor, IBCLC, and peer counselor;</li></ul>

- ensure peer counselors are available outside of normal WIC clinic hours and WIC environment; and
- Have **State-approved protocols** for:
  - referring WIC clients to peer counselors;
  - frequency and timing of peer counselor contacts;
  - settings where peer counselors provide services (e.g. telephone calls from home, the WIC office, hospital and/or home visits);
  - referring WIC clients to appropriate lactation specialists (breastfeeding problems outside the peer counselor's scope of work); and
  - referring WIC clients to community services as needed (consistent with minimum referrals required to be given by WIC counseling staff.)

#### **IV. Compensation/Reimbursement:**

Pay peer counselors at least 80% of a paraprofessional's entry level salary (but not less than minimum wage), and reimburse peer counselors for local agency approved telephone and travel expenses.

#### **V. Training:**

##### **A. Provide peer counselors with:**

- initial State approved breastfeeding training (minimum 20 hours);
- procedures for documenting client contacts;
- monthly breastfeeding education at regularly scheduled meetings;
- annual State required training, i.e., civil rights, etc.;
- orientation to WIC services and referrals (internal and external); and
- local WIC/ "Parent Agency" orientation including breast pump policies.

##### **B. Ensure that peer counselors demonstrate competency in the following areas:**

- counseling
- documentation
- referrals

##### **C. Ensure that the designated peer counselor coordinator, manager, or supervisor receives training in how to manage peer counseling programs through *"Using Loving Support to Manage Peer Counseling Programs"* training curriculum.**

##### **D. Ensure that WIC staff:**

- are trained in basic breastfeeding support;
- receive a Power Point training about the role of the WIC peer counselor which is *"Peer Counseling: Making a Difference for WIC"*

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*Families” included in the “Using Loving Support to Manage Peer Counseling Programs;” and*

- are familiar with the local agency’s peer counselor services.

## **VI. Monitoring:**

At least monthly ensure:

- designated staff conduct regular Quality Assurance (QA) to ensure documented contacts occurred and peer counselors provided appropriate counseling; and
- client contact logs are reviewed.

## **VII. Documentation:**

A. Ensure peer counselors document all client contacts utilizing a local agency specific system (i.e. client contact log, narrative summary) with enough information to facilitate continuity of care.

B. All client contacts shall be documented in English unless a system is in place for the supervisor or IBCLC to understand written peer counselor records.

C. Document the required codes in the Integrated Statewide Information System (ISIS):

- for all participants with a peer counselor; and
- for all participants who have contact with an IBCLC.

D. Submit reports to the WIC Branch as required.

## **VIII. Peer Counselor Support:**

Ensure peer counselors have:

- access to an IBCLC;
- regular weekly contact with their supervisor (in person or on the phone);
- regular biweekly opportunities to meet with fellow peer counselors;
- the necessary resources (e.g., Peer Counselor Training Manual;) and
- the opportunity to participate in WIC staff meetings on a regular basis.

## **IX. Confidentiality:**

Ensure all peer counselor program staff:

- adhere to WIC confidentiality requirements.
- have signed the Employee Security Affidavit (ESA) (WPM-WIC 190-20).

## **X. Community Partnerships:**

- A. Establish community partnerships to enhance the peer counselor program to:
- promote the peer counselor program;
  - establish a continuum of breastfeeding care and support; and
  - provide referrals to the WIC program.
- B. Establish Memorandums of Understanding with other entities/programs, if funds are used to train and pay their staff as peer counselors for WIC clients.

## **Recommended practices**

### **I. Peer counselors:**

Select peer counselors that:

- are current or previous WIC participants.
- have breastfed for at least six months.

### **II. Job Parameters:**

Ensure peer counselors:

- utilize the contact frequency recommendations in the *“Using Loving Support to Manage Peer Counseling Programs”* training curriculum;
- provide one-on-one counseling with mothers at the WIC site; and
- participate in WIC breastfeeding support group meetings.

### **III. Training/Support:**

Provide peer counselors with opportunities for continuing education through attendance at breastfeeding conferences/seminars.

### **IV. monitoring:**

Ensure designated staff conduct **weekly** QA to ensure documented contacts occurred and peer counselors provided appropriate counseling.

## **Best practices**

### **I. Job Parameters:**

Peer counselors conduct:

- home visits; and
- hospital visits.

### **II. Compensation/ Reimbursement**

Provide peer counselors with regular employee benefits.

### **III. Support:**

Provide peer counselors with:

- breastfeeding resource materials in the language spoken by the

peer counselor;

- opportunities to shadow or observe other peer counselors and IBCLCs;
- career path options (e.g. training/experience to become senior level peer counselor, WIC Nutrition Assistant and/or IBCLC.)

#### **IV. Community Partnerships:**

Establish a system of early notification of infant delivery to the WIC program by hospitals so that peer counselors can make contact in the early postpartum period.